



Directorate of
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Afghanistan Situation Report

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9 April 1985

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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Despite disruptions and high costs caused by the war, businessmen involved in foreign trade make profits because of Soviet and regime tolerance for business that brings in hard currency.

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Recent articles in the Soviet Military Herald by senior officers who have been closely associated with the Afghan war illuminate Soviet perceptions for improving troop effectiveness--both in Afghanistan and forcewide--by addressing the important topics of troop management, tactical intelligence, and aggressive approaches to combat operations.

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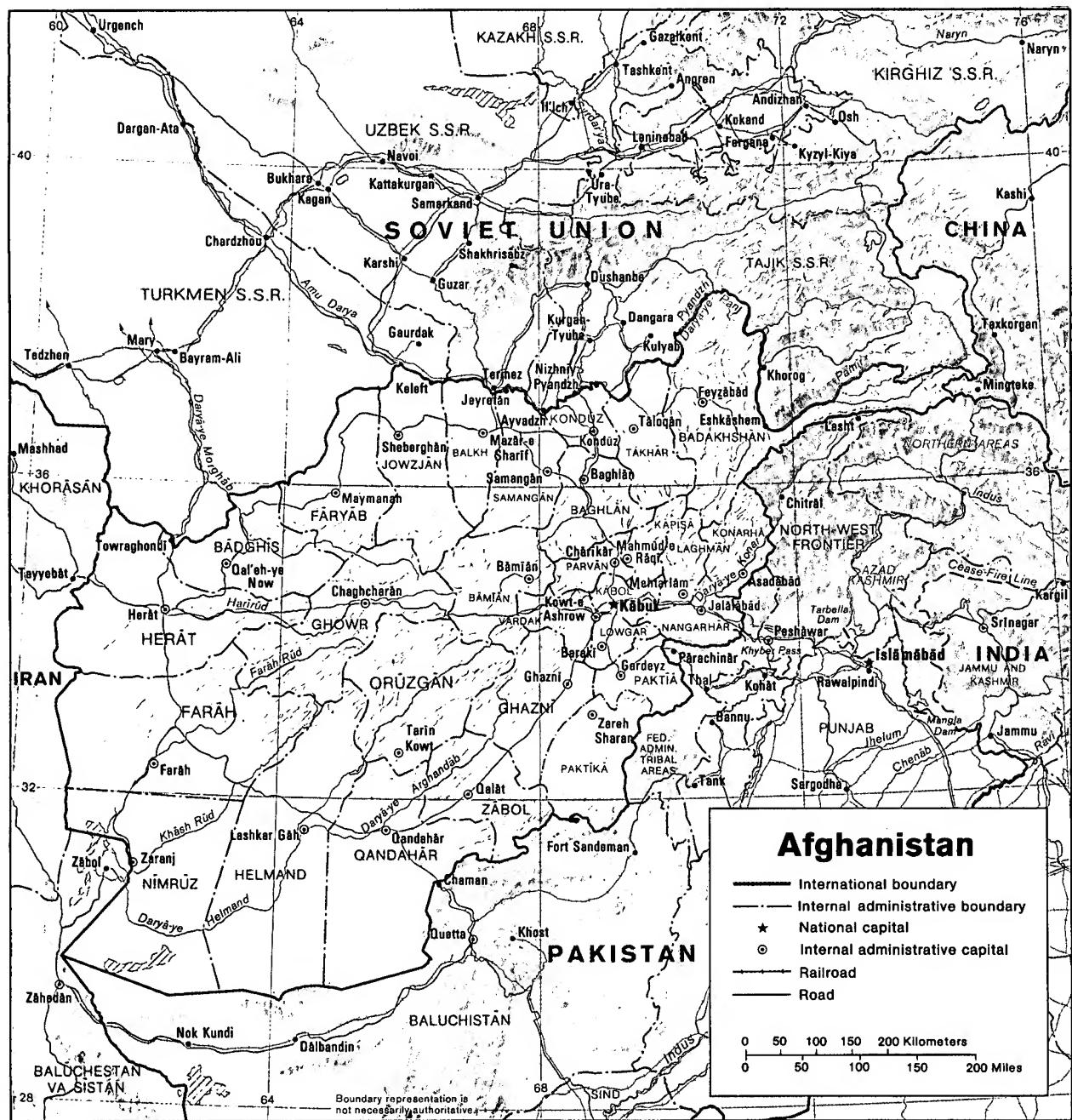
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**AN AFGHAN BUSINESSMAN'S VIEW OF THE WAR**

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An Afghan owner of a raisin processing plant in Kabul recently told a US Embassy official how difficult it was becoming to run his business. Loss of manpower and insecure transportation have cut production and required the businessman to buy his grapes from farms near Kabul at about six times the pre-war price. The source said, however, that the business remains extremely profitable.

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Comment: We believe the Soviets allow, and possibly encourage, some private entrepreneurs to continue their operations because of the hard currency they bring into the country. According to government statistics, dried fruits are the second largest export, and one of the largest sources of foreign exchange.

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IN BRIEF

- Sources of the US Embassy in Kabul report that on 30 March insurgents attacked a large convoy near the Salang Tunnel and destroyed 33 vehicles. The Soviets lost more than 60 vehicles and suffered 40 casualties in an attack along the same stretch of highway the previous week.

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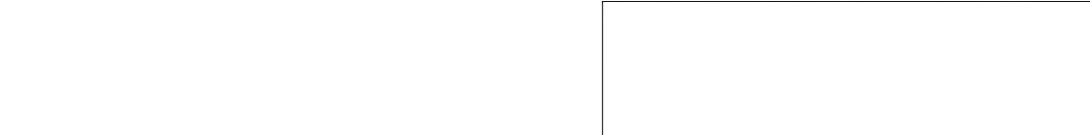


- The Chinese will provide paramilitary and field emergency training in China to approximately 50 Afghan insurgent commanders from the Jami-at-i-Islami and Hizbi Islami - Gulbuddin groups.

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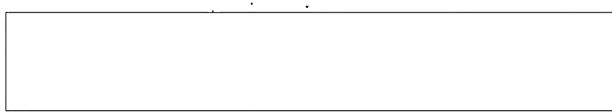
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-- Saudi Arabia awarded Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, leader of the Afghan Resistance Fundamentalist Alliance, the King Faisal International Award for Service to Islam on 2 April. Sayyaf's selection constitutes an endorsement of the Saudi's preferred mujahedin leader and reaffirms their support for the Afghan freedom fighters. [redacted]

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-- The Pakistani foreign ministry told US officials on 3 April that no airstrikes from Afghanistan on Pakistani territory have taken place since 19 March. Two overflights were observed, according to the ministry. [redacted]

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PERSPECTIVE

AFGHANISTAN: NEW EMPHASIS ON OLD MILITARY PROBLEMS

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Recent articles in Military Herald--professional journal of Soviet Ground Forces--provide insight into problems the Soviets are experiencing and lessons they are learning in Afghanistan. In particular, several articles by senior officers who have been closely associated with the Afghan war illuminate Soviet perceptions on the important topics of troop management, tactical intelligence, and an aggressive approach to combat operations. These issues have relevance to Soviet forces as a whole, but are particularly acute in Afghanistan where shortcomings are less easily concealed and have more serious consequences. Among the solutions the senior officers propose are closer ties between officers and their men, more reconnaissance at the battalion level and below, and more aggressiveness on the part of unit commanders.

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Background

Over the past several years, articles on combat operations in mountainous regions have appeared more frequently in Military Herald, with many specifically referring to problems experienced and lessons learned during "training" in Afghanistan. Most of the articles that refer specifically to Soviet forces in Afghanistan have dealt with Soviet airborne troops, but other articles also appear to draw on Soviet experience gained in the war.

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Problems of Troop Management*

the Soviet military press-- have noted problems in troop management in Afghanistan which are also typical of those experienced by Soviet units elsewhere: dereliction of duty and lack of

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*Troop management encompasses all activities of commanders and staffs directed toward the accomplishment of a unit's mission both in combat and in the development and maintenance of training standards, readiness, discipline, and morale.

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professional competence by officers; black marketeering by officers and soldiers; poor and sometimes brutal relationships between officers and soldiers, between sergeants and soldiers, and between senior and junior enlisted men; alcoholism in all ranks; and ethnic tensions.

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Soviet efforts to solve such problems concentrate on the officer corps, both because the commander is held accountable for the actions of his subordinates and because, to a considerable extent, the officer corps is a major part of the problem. The Soviets emphasize the importance of individual work by commanders with subordinates.

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An article by Army General D. Sukhorukhov, Commanding General of the Airborne Forces (VDV), in the October 1984 issue of Military Herald emphasized the need for commanders to "mix" with their troops--in the field and in garrison--in order to develop personal relationships. The article, directed specifically at junior officers, cites three VDV officers who served with distinction in Afghanistan and who had excellent relations with their troops. Successful leadership principles which Sukhorukhov recommends to others include leading by example; paying attention to strengths, weaknesses, problems, personal background, and interests of each soldier; and supporting subordinates and considering their suggestions.

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Sukhorukhov's views reflect longstanding "prescriptions," but his emphasis on Afghanistan is significant. Reality--both in Afghanistan and elsewhere--indicates that not all VDV officers (let alone all Soviet army officers) measure up to Sukhorukhov's precepts. Combat experience in Afghanistan probably has highlighted weaknesses in Soviet junior and mid-level leadership and given impetus to efforts to improve the Soviet officer corps forcewide.

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Problems in Tactical Intelligence

One of the most serious and persistent problems for the Soviets in Afghanistan has been tactical intelligence. They repeatedly have been frustrated in attempts to locate elusive insurgent forces in a sufficiently accurate and timely manner to engage the

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insurgents. [redacted]

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Articles in the October and December 1984 issues of Military Herald by Colonel General F. Gredasov and Army General A. Majorov addressed tactical intelligence from the perspective of their considerable experience in Afghanistan. Gredasov, associated with the Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet Ground Forces, was a frequent visitor to Afghanistan in the entourage of then-First Deputy Minister of Defense Sokolov during the 1979 to 1984 period when Sokolov oversaw the direction of the war. General Majorov, the First Deputy Commander in Chief of the Soviet Ground Forces, formerly was Chief of the Soviet Military Assistance Group in Kabul. [redacted]

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Gredasov's article deals with the necessity for units at battalion level and below to conduct reconnaissance effectively. He emphasizes the commander's (and staff's) responsibility to organize reconnaissance using all resources available. Specific suggestions include: establishing specific tasks for reconnaissance as far in advance as possible; conducting reconnaissance by foot patrols in mountainous regions in advance of units in vehicles; and maintaining constant communication with reconnaissance elements. [redacted]

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General Majorov touches on some of the same themes in his article discussing factors which contribute to combat effectiveness. Majorov, citing Gredasov's article, notes that reconnaissance is the most complex and most important type of combat support. Majorov charges, however, that many Soviet battalion commanders tend to rely too heavily on intelligence support from other units rather than fully utilizing organic reconnaissance assets. Majorov criticizes commanders who complain of inadequate resources to conduct effective reconnaissance, and says that battalions should be able to accomplish their intelligence missions if commanders use their assets wisely. [redacted]

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Inefficiencies of current Soviet tactical intelligence operations in Afghanistan may reinforce calls throughout the Soviet military for improved reconnaissance and provide some valuable--though

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painful--lessons on how to do so. Soviet commanders probably recognize that tactical intelligence must be improved to cope with targeting problems in a more conventional war as well as in Afghanistan. Majorov specifically notes, for example, that developments in foreign armies, such as the use of precision-guided munitions and advanced fire-control and target acquisition systems, will demand more effective reconnaissance on the part of Soviet forces.

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Aggressiveness in Combat

The ultimate measure of effectiveness of a military unit, its ability to close with and defeat an opposing force, depends to a considerable extent on the unit's aggressiveness and ability to react in a quickly changing combat situation. Aggressiveness and quick reaction, in turn, are largely functions of commander initiative and decisiveness at critical junctures in the battle.

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The Soviet combat record in Afghanistan to date has been mixed. A recurring comment on Soviet forces in Afghanistan--both by the insurgents as well as by senior Soviet officers--has been the lack of aggressiveness by Soviet units in combat.

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Lieutenant General V. Kostylev, the First Deputy Commander in Chief of the VDV, in a January 1985 Military Herald article, addresses the importance of combat activeness, decisiveness, and initiative on the part of units and commanders. His article is based, at least in part, on his experiences in Afghanistan in 1983 and 1984.

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Kostylev sees the goal of officer training to be the development of tactical maturity--a maturity that will enable commanders at a given moment to cast aside a previous plan to deal with a new situation. Commanders, he argues, must at all times be unafraid to take calculated risks to conduct aggressive combat

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operations. Kostylev notes the achievements of some VDV units and commanders in Afghanistan and elsewhere, but also admits that not all commanders and units measure up. [redacted]

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Display of initiative and aggressiveness by commanders in Afghanistan may be hindered by two factors. First, the Soviets have pursued an economy of force approach to the war to keep down personnel and material costs. Commanders may, therefore, be more concerned with limiting losses than with inflicting maximum casualties on the insurgents. Second, the high level direction of the war--evident, for example, in repeated and prolonged visits to Afghanistan by senior Soviet military officers--would suggest that commanders at all levels probably perceive themselves to be on a "tight rein." [redacted]

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Implications

The war in Afghanistan has highlighted longstanding problems and weaknesses in the Soviet military. Most of the problems are not unique to Soviet units in Afghanistan, to guerrilla war, or to wars in general, but the Afghan combat situation increases the penalties for failure. By exposing these deficiencies, the Soviet experience in Afghanistan will more clearly focus the attention of military leaders on the need for corrective action in the short term--to improve force effectiveness in Afghanistan--and in the long term--to improve forcewide preparations for all types of combat. [redacted]

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